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OUR FATHERS, OUR FUTURE: A PORTRAIT OF BLACK FATHERS IN NEW ORLEANS

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LINDY BOGGS NATIONAL CENTER
FOR COMMUNITY LITERACY
It's Not Just About Literacy...It's About Hope.

About the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy

Located in the J. Edgar and Louise S. Monroe Library at Loyola University New Orleans, the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy is dedicated to promoting adult literacy as a vehicle for personal, economic, and community empowerment.

The Boggs Center seeks to nurture collaborative partnerships between Loyola and its surrounding metropolitan community. In addition, the Center will provide local literacy providers with access to current information and training and pursue a collaborative, community-based research agenda.

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Cover photo by Peter Nakhid

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fathers matter. The literature tells us that children raised with significant positive father involvement have higher cognitive and verbal skills, greater self-esteem, and display greater empathy compared to other children. Positive father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent and unhealthy behaviors, and is associated with less drug use; less truancy and stealing; and fewer problems with depression, sadness, and lying. Research has shown that fathers of all income levels and cultural backgrounds—including fathers who do not share a home with their children—can positively impact the development of their children.

FATHERS OF ALL INCOME LEVELS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS— INCLUDING FATHERS WHO DO NOT SHARE A HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN—CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN.

Importantly, among nonresident fathers, African Americans were more likely to have greater contact with their young children than white or Hispanic fathers. The reason may reflect the fact that African American nonresident fathers are more likely than white or Hispanic nonresident fathers to maintain positive relationships with their children's mothers, including some nonresident fathers who continue to have a romantic relationship with the mothers and who at times may live within the home. White nonresident fathers, in contrast, are more likely to be divorced fathers who may have experienced a traumatic family breakdown before separation.

The 1950s stereotype of the American nuclear family, with the father working and the mother acting as the primary caregiver, no longer fits. By 2011, one-third of all births nationwide were to unmarried women. Meanwhile, the share of fathers with working wives who routinely care for their children under age 15 has grown to 32 percent. Yet there is an unspoken assumption among many educators and nonprofit providers that parent involvement means only mothers' involvement.

To be sure, there are some 28,000 children living in single-mother headed households in New Orleans. But counting the number of children in single-mother households is not a substitute for counting children in father-absent families. Researchers at Princeton University, Columbia University, and the Brookings Institution have found that nonresident and cohabitating fathers want to be involved in raising their children and are highly motivated to do so. In one national study of nonresident fathers' involvement with children five years old and younger, 63 percent of nonresident fathers saw their children more than once in the past month.

To ensure that all New Orleans' children have strong father figures in their lives, it is important that K-12 educators and family service providers question the unspoken assumptions that parental involvement means mother involvement and that nonresident fathers don't want to be engaged in their children's lives. When educators and family service providers fail to include fathers in their parent involvement activities, they further marginalize fathers. Service agencies can support father involvement by providing staff training and development that reinforces the important role of fathers and eliminates negative assumptions or stereotypes about men and fathers. They can ensure that photos, magazines, and brochures in the lobby represent both men's and women's interests. And they can recruit fathers to assist in planning events and services for other fathers and for the broader community. In short, as a whole our community must recognize that fathers are parents, too.

INTRODUCTION

Research is clear: Active, nurturing fathers enhance children's development and education.¹ For example, when fathers are involved in their children's schools, children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior.² Indeed, the significance of fathers has grown in recent years as men are increasingly involved in the care and nurturing of their children. In 2010, 32 percent of U.S. fathers with working wives routinely cared for their children under age 15, up from 26 percent in 2002.³

We all know intuitively that fathers matter to their children, families, and communities. But many fathers—particularly nonresident fathers and cohabitating fathers—are overlooked by policies and marginalized by programs that aim to improve child, family, and community well-being. In addition, they are undercounted within statistical data.⁴ In this report, we explain why fathers matter (including nonresident and cohabitating fathers), provide baseline data on fathers in New Orleans, and give examples of programs and policies to increase the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, in the labor force, and in the community.

BEYOND DATA: STORIES FROM NEW ORLEANS FATHERS

"TO ME, BEING A FATHER IS ALL ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY. BECOMING A FATHER WAS WHAT TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE A MAN. I HAD TO MAKE SO MANY SACRIFICES SO THAT HE COULD HAVE A BETTER LIFE THAN I DO."

Wyman Diaz, Jr., wakes up early to get his 3-year-old son to child care. He adds two early morning hours to his daily routine just so that he can get in some quality time with his son before bringing him to child care and then heading to work.

As a young man growing up with a father who was in and out of his life, Wyman is determined to set a different example for his son.

"To me, being a father is all about responsibility," he says. "Becoming a father was what taught me how to be a man. I had to make so many sacrifices so that he could have a better life than I do."

For Wyman, fatherhood has not come without its challenges. From the struggles of finding a good job and housing to the struggles of a strained relationship with his son's mother, Wyman's commitment to fatherhood has been tested. He does not have a car and often travels by bus. At times, that can be a significant challenge but one that is easily put in perspective when Wyman compares it to the opportunities to be in his son's life in a meaningful way.

Source: Excerpted and abridged from articles by Gregory Rattler, Jr., for the Neighborhood Partnership Network.

WHY FATHERS MATTER

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing recognition that fathers are equally as important as mothers in the success and development of their children. For example, children raised with significant positive father involvement have higher cognitive and verbal skills, greater self-esteem, and display greater empathy compared to other children.⁵ Fathers, long considered an important financial resource for children, are increasingly recognized as an important emotional resource for their children. Positive father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent and unhealthy behaviors. Father involvement is associated with less drug use, less truancy and stealing, and fewer problems with depression, sadness, and lying.⁶ Men, in their roles as fathers, also accrue positive benefits for themselves, including an expanded sense of self and expanded ability for caring and nurturance.⁷

Research has shown that fathers of all income levels and cultural backgrounds—including fathers who do not share a home with their children—can positively impact the development of their children.⁸ The term “fragile families” has been coined

by researchers to describe poor children born outside of marriage whose parents are working together to raise them—either by living together

or by frequent visitation of the father.⁹ For fathers in these families, there are many challenges to staying positively engaged with their children. In New Orleans, the employment rate among black men has plummeted since 1980, when it was 63 percent, to less than 50 percent today. And only 15 percent of black men in New Orleans have an associate’s degree or higher. Facing limited job opportunities, many young African American men become engaged

in the underground economy characterized by drugs, gangs, and violence, and when they become fathers, their bleak reality extends to their children. As a result, the child poverty rate for African Americans in New Orleans is 55 percent. To reduce this epidemic of poverty among children, it is critical to not only recognize that fathers matter but also to understand who the fathers in New Orleans are and to address their obstacles to involvement with their children.

CHILDREN RAISED WITH SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE FATHER INVOLVEMENT HAVE HIGHER COGNITIVE AND VERBAL SKILLS, GREATER SELF-ESTEEM, AND DISPLAY GREATER EMPATHY COMPARED TO OTHER CHILDREN.



Photos by Peter Nakhid

BEYOND DATA: STORIES FROM NEW ORLEANS FATHERS

*"IT'S SUCH A BLESSING
TO BE ABLE TO BE
THERE WITH MY SON
AND BE ABLE TO
GO TO HIS GAMES."*

For more than 22 years, Waldorf Gipson, III – "Gip" – has focused on getting his players to reach their fullest potential on the court, in the classroom, and in the community.

As a product of the New Orleans Recreation Department, he is extremely passionate about giving his time back to the young boys and girls of New Orleans. "It is really important to me because I am sometimes the father-figure to over 20 young men and women. I always said that when I got older, I would coach and give back to the kids," added Gip.

Gip is also a father to two children of his own. To him, fatherhood is a tremendous honor that he has a deeper appreciation for when considering some of his own experiences as a child playing sports. With his father working to support the family, Gip's mother was often alone at his games. However, in the one instance that his father was able to attend his game, it made an impression on him that lasts to this day. "I will never forget the feeling of being at the plate (to bat) and seeing that Schlitz truck. I saw my daddy and his co-worker sitting on a bench, and I was so happy from then on." He went on to say, "It's such a blessing to be able to be there with my son and be able to go to his games."

Source: Excerpted and abridged from articles by Gregory Rattler, Jr., for the Neighborhood Partnership Network.

DEFINING FATHERHOOD

Defining fatherhood is a complex task based on law, genetics, and social interactions.¹⁰ Federal statistical data contribute to how we commonly define and count fathers. Below are some brief definitions for select types of fathers:

RESIDENT FATHER AND NONRESIDENT FATHER: A resident father is a man who lives in the same household as his child. A nonresident father is a man who lives separately from his child.

SINGLE FATHER: A single father is an unmarried head of household residing with his minor children. An unmarried partner may or may not live in the household.

CUSTODIAL FATHER AND NONCUSTODIAL FATHER: A custodial father maintains legal custody and primary care of a minor child. A noncustodial father does not maintain primary care of his minor child.

COHABITATING FATHER: A cohabitating father resides in the same household as his child and his unmarried partner but is not the head of household.

SOCIAL FATHER: A social father is a cultural term for a man who takes *de facto* responsibility for a child.

STEPFATHER: A stepfather is the husband of the child's mother.

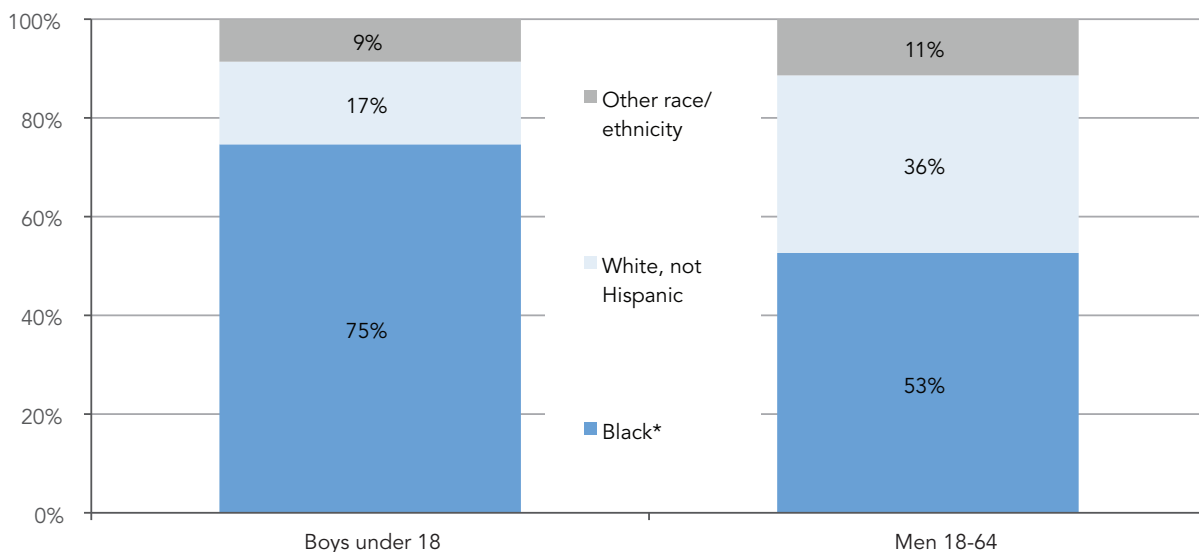
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF NEW ORLEANS FATHERS

To inform the policies and planning efforts of local service providers and educational institutions, we provide a detailed demographic profile of African American fathers and white fathers in New Orleans.¹¹ However, the 2010 Census only identifies married fathers and single, head of household fathers who reside with their own children. Thus, there is no doubt that fathers are undercounted in this statistical data. In order to include characteristics of nonresident and cohabitating fathers, some data is presented for all African American men and white men in New Orleans.

NEW ORLEANS' FATHERS OF THE FUTURE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE AFRICAN AMERICAN

National fertility surveys indicate that 52 percent of men are fathers by 30 years old and 76 percent are fathers by 40 years old.¹² Based on these probabilities, it is likely that the majority of working-age men in New Orleans are fathers. In 2010, there were 113,817 men ages 18 to 64 in New Orleans, and of these, 53 percent were African American men. Moreover, 75 percent of boys under 18 years of age were African American in New Orleans, suggesting that New Orleans' fathers of the future are more likely to be African American. As such, African American men and boys are a particularly important focus of fatherhood engagement programs in New Orleans.

Male population by race and age, 2010
New Orleans



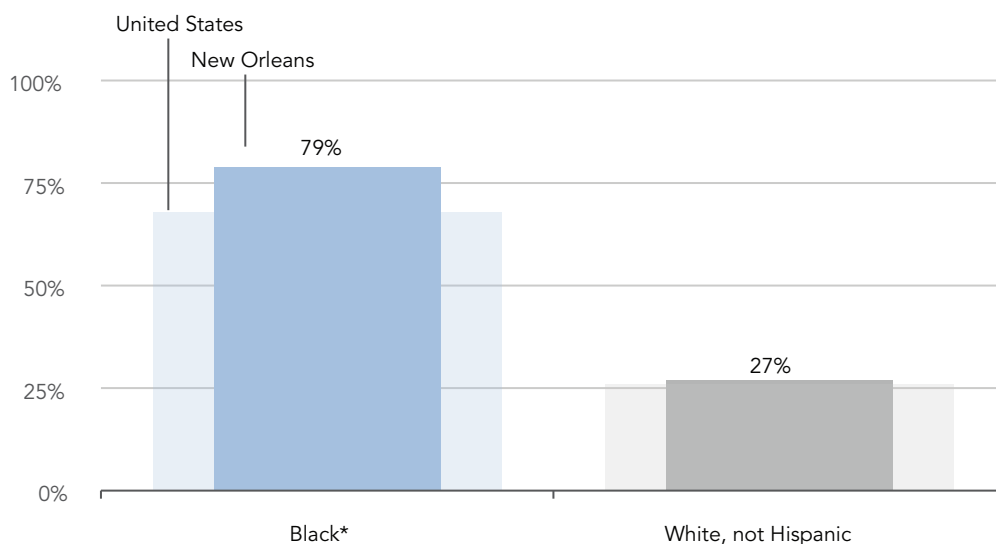
Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

In New Orleans, the share of fathers who are nonresident and cohabitating fathers is likely higher than for the nation. As of 2011, 64 percent of women in New Orleans with a birth in the previous 12 months were unmarried, compared to only 36 percent of women in the United States. Among

African American women in New Orleans with a recent birth, 79 percent were unmarried, compared to 68 percent in the U.S.¹³ Thus, we can roughly estimate that about 79 percent of African American children born in New Orleans during 2010-11 had nonresident or cohabitating fathers.¹⁴

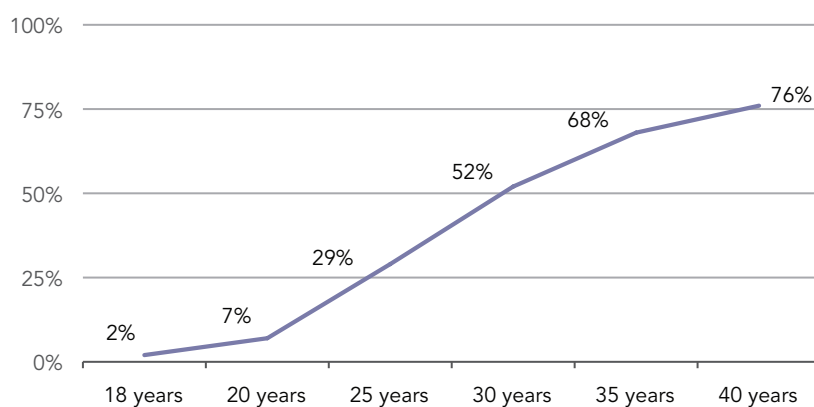
Share of women with a birth in the previous 12 months who were unmarried, 2011



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.
 * May include individuals who self-report Black as well as Hispanic.

Probability of a man being a father by age

United States



Fathers who did not reside with their children are not counted by the Census Bureau. However, surveys by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that 52 percent of men are fathers by the age of 30 and 76 percent are fathers by the age of 40.

Source citation: Martinez, G., Daniels, K., & Chandra, A. (2012). Fertility of Men and Women Aged 15–44 Years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010. Retrieved April 23, 2013 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr051.pdf>.
 Notes: Data is for 2006–2010. Fathers are defined as fathering a biological child regardless of whether the child lives with them now.

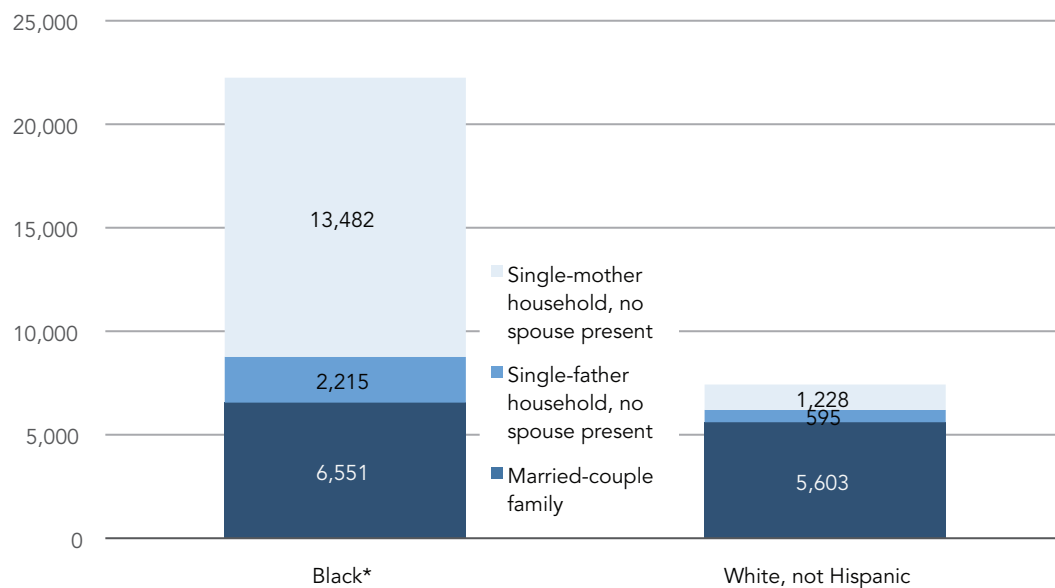


Photos by Peter Nakhid

Among African American families with children, 8,766 of these families (or 39 percent) included the father—either as single-father or married-couple households—in 2010. Another 13,482 families (or 61 percent) were headed by a single mother. Although there are far fewer white families with children in New Orleans, 83 percent of these families—or 6,198 families—included the father, with the vast majority being married-couple families.

COUNTING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SINGLE-MOTHER HOUSEHOLDS IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNTING CHILDREN IN FATHER-ABSENT FAMILIES.

Number of married-couple and single-parent families residing with their own children, 2010
New Orleans



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

Notes: "Own" children in a family are sons and daughters, including stepchildren and adopted children, of the householder.

From the perspective of children's living arrangements, there were 15,595 African American children in New Orleans who resided with their fathers in 2010—either in single-father or married couple households. However, more than twice as many African American children (38,933) lived with their mother, grandparents, or in other living arrangements—but with no father.

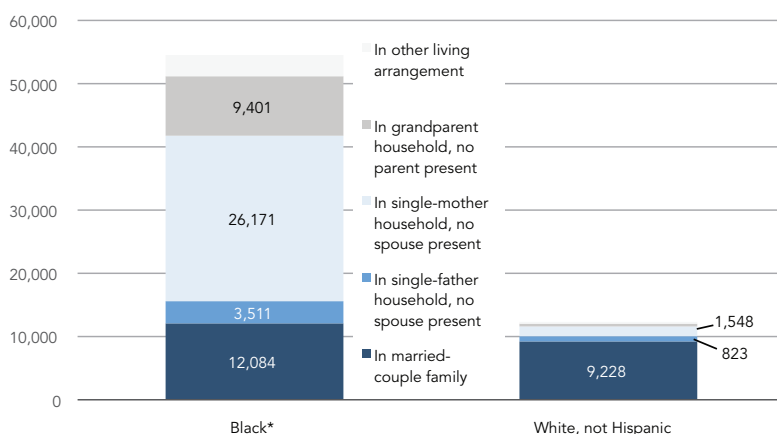
Although resident fathers are more involved in their children's lives than nonresident fathers, it is important to note that counting the number of children in single-mother households is not a substitute for counting children in father-absent families. Researchers at Princeton University, Columbia University, and the Brookings Institution have found that nonresident and cohabitating fathers want to be involved in raising their children and are highly involved in the early years of their children's lives although involvement declines over time.¹⁵ In one national study of nonresident father's involvement with children five years old and younger, 63 percent of nonresident fathers saw their child more than once in the past month. However, by year five, that share dropped to 43 percent.

Importantly, among nonresident fathers, African Americans were more likely to have greater contact with their young children than white or Hispanic fathers. The reason may reflect that African American nonresident fathers are more likely than white or Hispanic nonresident fathers to maintain a positive relationship with their child's mother, including some nonresident fathers who continue to have a romantic relationship with the mother and who at times may live within the home.¹⁶ White nonresident fathers, in contrast, are more likely to be divorced fathers who may have experienced a traumatic family breakdown before separation.

Among African American fathers who live with their children, the majority work and are the primary breadwinners for their household. However, a lower share of African American fathers than white fathers work, indicating that white fathers are experiencing more success in securing meaningful employment than black fathers in New Orleans.

The Census provides little information about fathers who do not live with their children. However, clearly a large number of fathers in New Orleans

Number of children (under 18 years old) by family structure, 2010
New Orleans



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

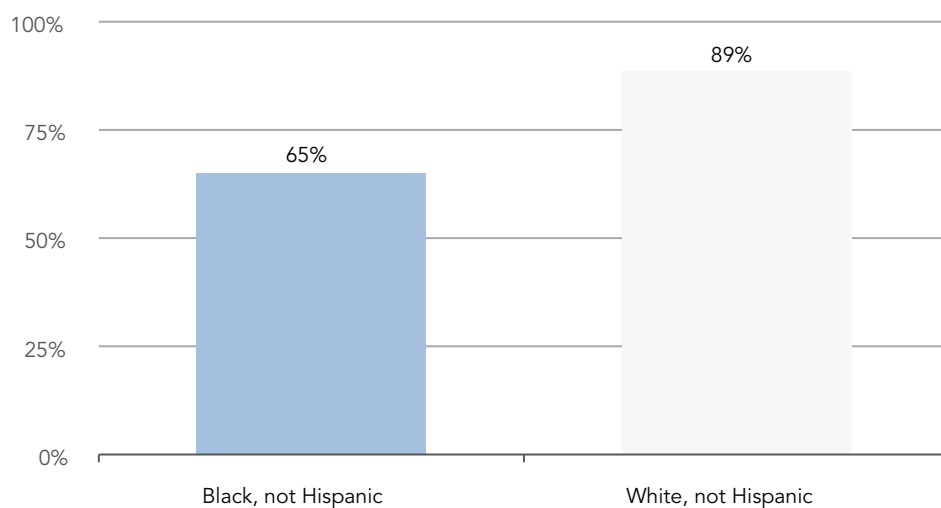
* May include individuals who self-report Black as well as Hispanic.

A small number of single-parent households may include both unmarried parents, but data from the 2010 Census does not allow us to quantify those households. We do know that, as of 2011, 21 percent of unmarried women in New Orleans with a recent birth lived with a partner. However, a national study indicates that more than half of unwed couples who have children together are living apart within only a few years of their baby's birth.¹⁷

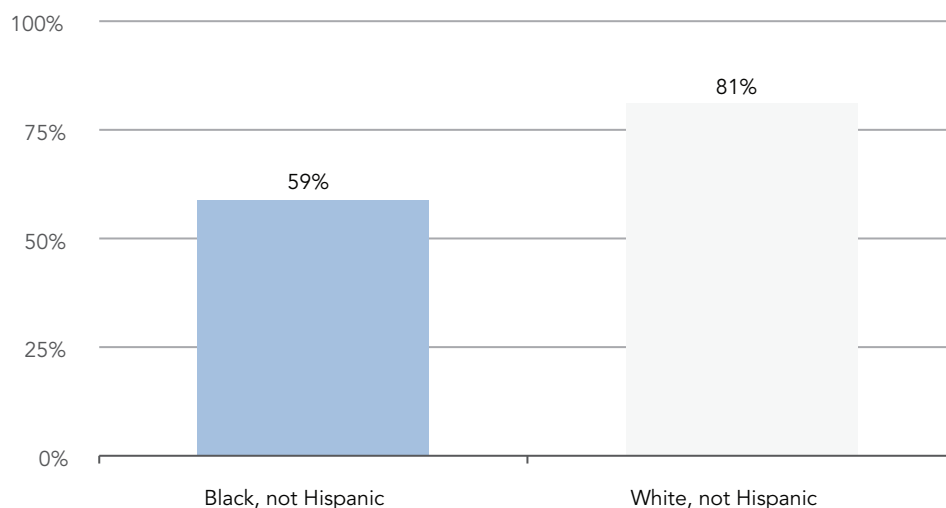
do not live with their children given that there are 15,319 female-headed households with children and no spouse present. Of these, 13,482 are African American female headed households and 1,228 are white female headed households, indicating that African American fathers are more likely than white fathers to be nonresident or cohabitating fathers. Notably, while there are 13,482 African American female-headed households with children

and no spouse present, there are 11,619 African American males living alone in New Orleans—many of whom may represent nonresident fathers. In order to capture data on the many fathers who are living alone, cohabitating with female householders, and residing without their children in other living arrangements, we next describe socioeconomic characteristics for *all* men in New Orleans.

Share of resident fathers who worked, 2009-11, three-year average New Orleans



Share of resident fathers who earn more than 50 percent of the household income, 2009-11 three-year average New Orleans



Source citation: IPUMS USA microdata: 2009-2011 American Community Survey.
Notes: Includes only fathers who reside with their child.

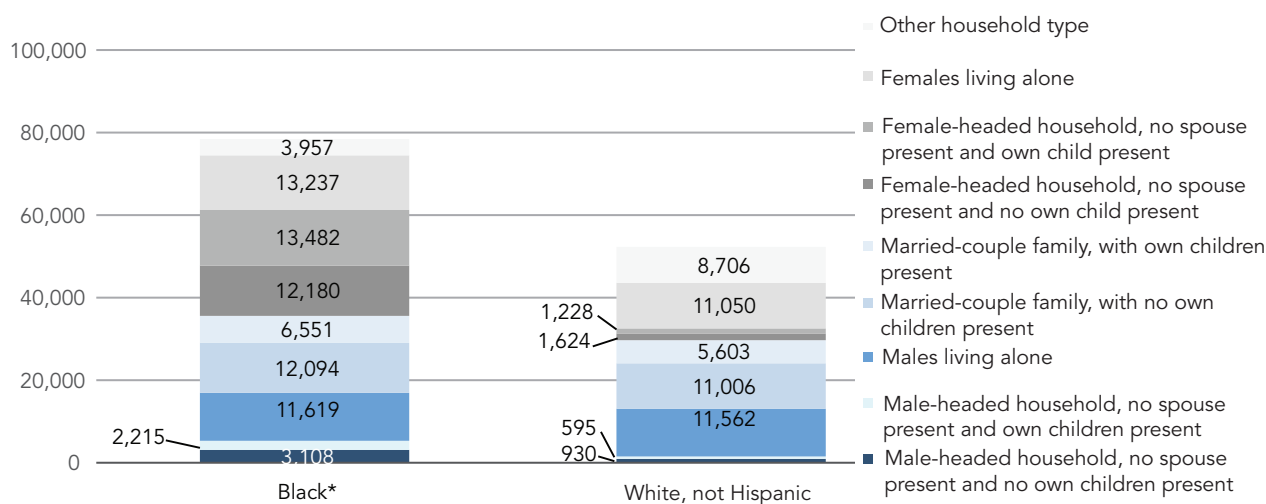
Generally speaking, higher earnings and employment improves the odds that nonresident fathers will have regular contact with their children and engage with their children in shared activities.¹⁸ Yet, many African American men are unemployed or underemployed, as evidenced by the fact that only 48 percent of working-age black men have employment compared to 74 percent of white men.

Higher levels of educational attainment increase earnings and employment rates.¹⁹ And yet, fully 36 percent of all African American men in New Orleans have a high school degree only and an additional 27 have less than a high school degree.

Given their low employment rates and low educational attainment levels, African American men

Household types, 2010

New Orleans

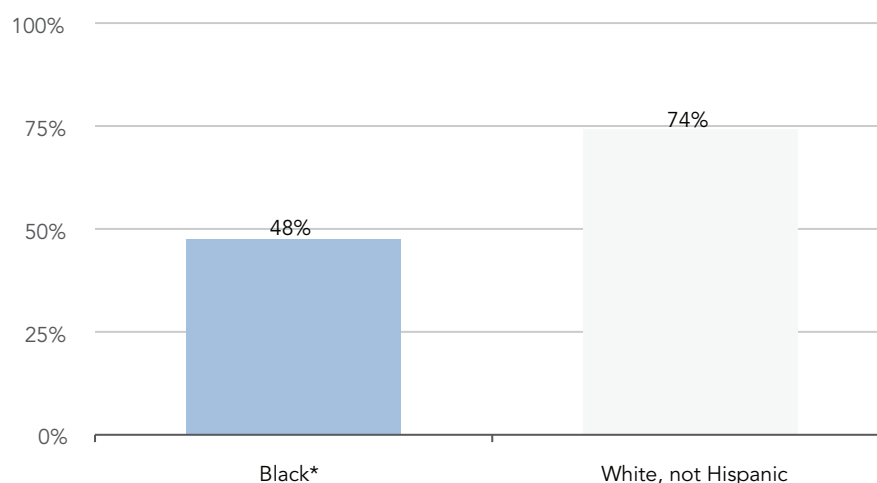


Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

Employment rates for men (16-64 years old), 2011

New Orleans



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

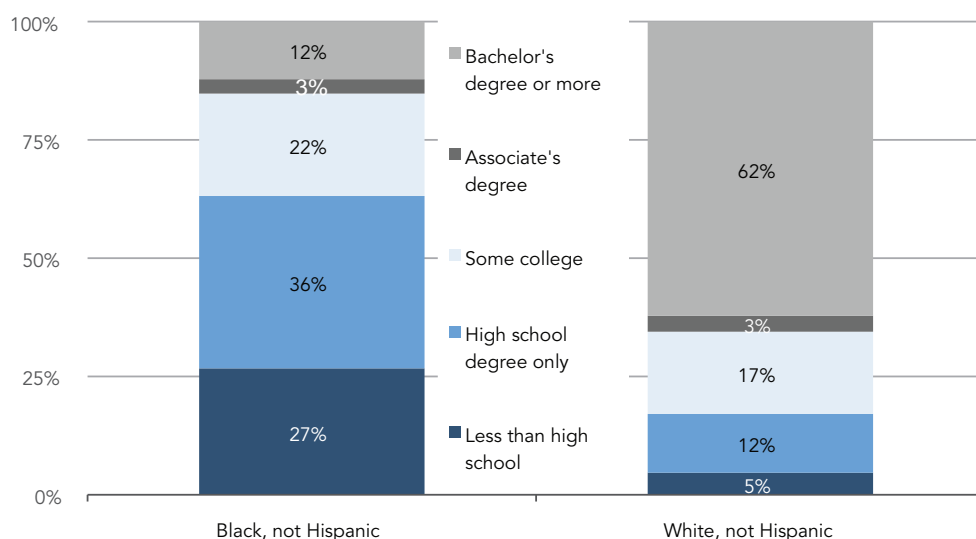
* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

Note: Universe includes the incarcerated population and Armed Services. Employment is defined as working at any time during the reference week or not working during the reference week because of temporary absence (excluding layoff).

have relatively high poverty rates. In New Orleans, 27 percent of African American men live in poverty compared to 15 percent of white men and 12 percent of men nationwide. Thus, employment barriers of African American men, such as limited education and work experience, are compounded by other circumstances of poverty, including unstable housing and lack of access to transportation.

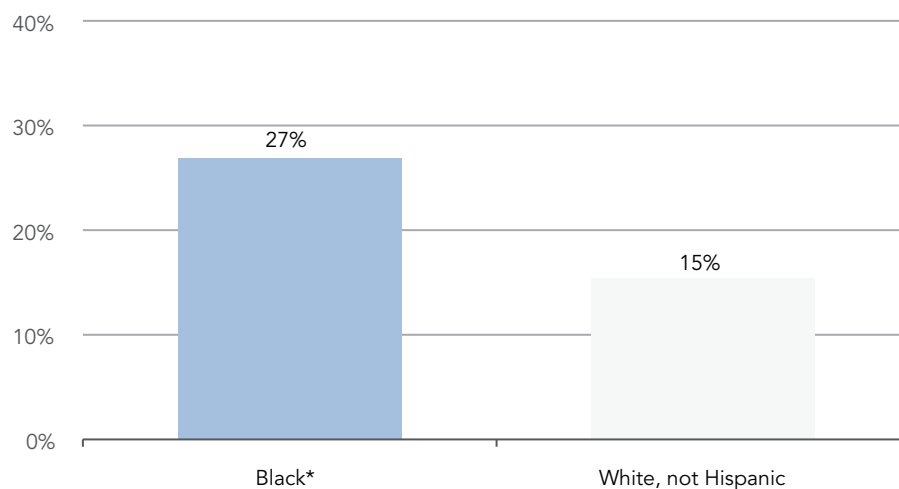
IN NEW ORLEANS, 27 PERCENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN LIVE IN POVERTY COMPARED TO 15 PERCENT OF WHITE MEN AND 12 PERCENT OF MEN NATIONWIDE.

Educational attainment of men (25 years and older), 2009-11, three-year average New Orleans



Source citation: IPUMS USA microdata: 2009-2011 American Community Survey.

Poverty rates for men (18 years and older), 2011 New Orleans



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

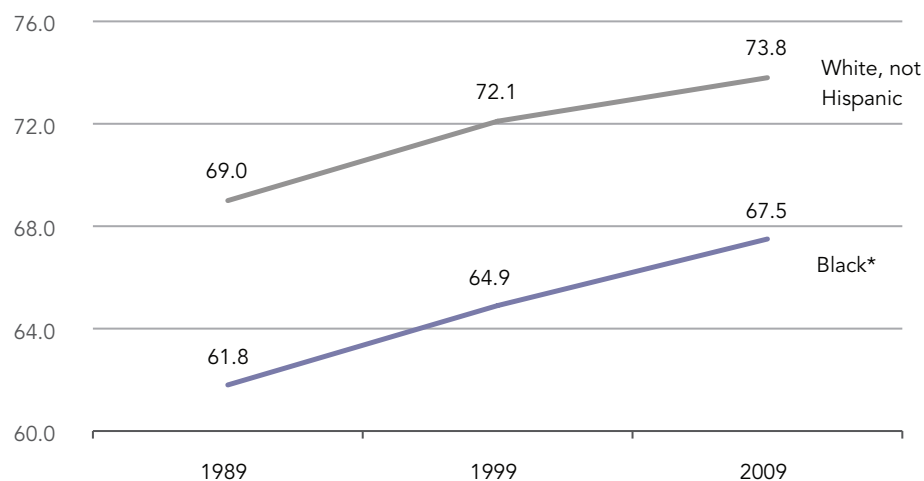


Photos by Peter Nakhid

A large volume of research indicates that living in poverty increases the risk of poor overall health, depression, and dying.²⁰ Life expectancy is a measure often used to gauge the overall health of a population. In 1989, life expectancy at birth for white men in New Orleans was 7.2 years longer than for African American men. That gap in life expectancy has narrowed to 6.3 years in 2009, as life expectancy increased faster for African American men than for white men. According to national data on mental health characteristics, African American men are also more likely than white men to report feelings of sadness or that everything is an effort all of the time.²¹

Male life expectancy at birth, 1989-2009

New Orleans



Source citation: Institute for Health Metrics Evaluation, University of Washington.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

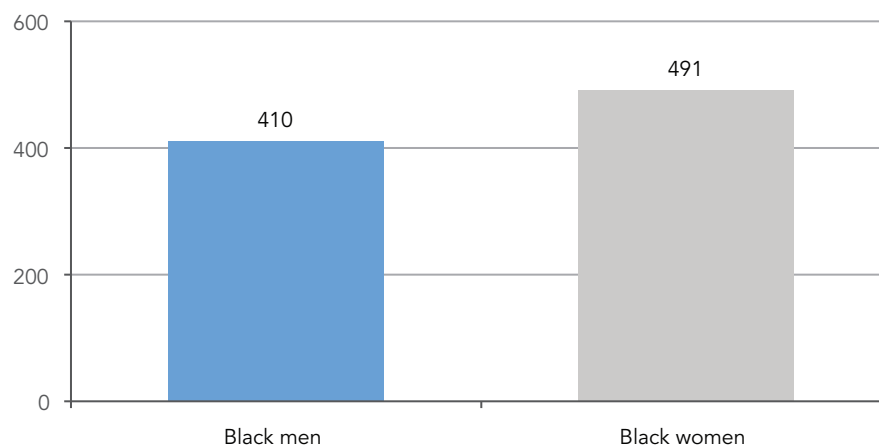
Note: In years.



Photos by Peter Nakhid

Owning a home is an important asset for building wealth and economic security. In the city of New Orleans, 45 percent of African American households are homeowners versus 53 percent of white households.²² Furthermore, data on 2011 loan originations in the New Orleans metro area²³ suggest that African American homebuyers are more likely to be women than men, indicating that African American men are less likely to be benefitting from this important asset-building opportunity.

Loans originated for the purchase of a home, 2011 New Orleans metro



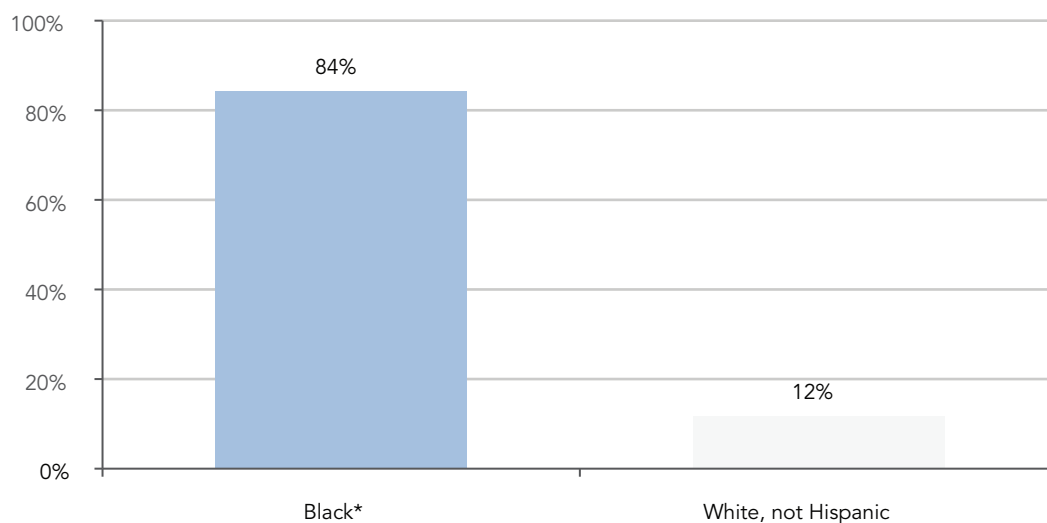
Source citation: Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, 2011.

Notes: Home purchases without use of a mortgage are not captured. Data for the city of New Orleans was not available. The New Orleans metro area includes the seven parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, and St. Tammany.

At the time of the 2010 Census held on April 1st, a total of 3,318 men over 18 years old were being held in correctional facilities in New Orleans. Of these, 2,793 were African American. Thus, while African Americans make up 53 percent of New Orleans men 18 years and older, African Americans make up a disproportionate share of the incarcerated male adults in New Orleans at 84 percent. Approximately one-third of incarcerated individuals were sentenced to state prison but being housed in Orleans Parish.²⁴ For fathers who are released after long detentions or prison sentences, it is often difficult to find stable housing and employment and to re-establish healthy relationships with children and family.²⁵ Among prisoners who are released and cannot return to the homes of families or friends, many end up in homeless shelters or on the street.²⁶ This is likely the case in New Orleans where 73 percent of the homeless population (sheltered and unsheltered) is male and a disproportionate share is likely African American.²⁷

WHILE AFRICAN AMERICANS MAKE UP 53 PERCENT OF NEW ORLEANS MEN 18 YEARS AND OLDER, AFRICAN AMERICANS MAKE UP 84 PERCENT OF THE INCARCERATED MALE ADULTS IN NEW ORLEANS.

Share of incarcerated male population (18 years and older), 2010
New Orleans



Source citation: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

* May include individuals who self-report black as well as Hispanic.

National literature has found that the majority of low-income, noncustodial parents do not meet their child support obligations because they do not earn enough to pay what is ordered and often work irregularly.²⁸ Data on child support payment rates is not available for New Orleans. However, high poverty and incarceration rates for African American men in New Orleans indicate there is likely low compliance with child support orders in New Orleans. Across the U.S., 42 percent of custodial mothers receive full child support payments—and in New Orleans, this share is likely even lower.²⁹ Helping fathers to secure employment and keep current on child support payments—including through debt forgiveness programs—positively impacts a father’s ability to emotionally and financially provide for his children.³⁰

*HELPING FATHERS TO SECURE
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INCLUDING THROUGH DEBT FOR-
GIVENESS PROGRAMS—POSITIVELY
IMPACTS A FATHER’S ABILITY TO
EMOTIONALLY AND FINANCIALLY
PROVIDE FOR HIS CHILDREN.*



Photo by Peter Nakhid

PROMISING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES TO ENGAGE AND SUPPORT FATHERS

To be sure, increasing the educational attainment and employment opportunities for men in New Orleans—particularly African American men—is essential for maximizing positive father involvement with children. This, in turn, will contribute to reducing delinquent and unhealthy behaviors among children and as such is critical to pressing issues in our city, such as high crime rates. Not incidentally, increasing educational attainment and employment opportunities for African American men is also essential to maximizing the productivity of all New Orleans’ workers, increasing our economic output, and growing our tax base. This topic is so important that we have dedicated an entire report to it, including recommendations for linking black men in New Orleans to work opportunities in the growing petrochemical and construction industries. See “Recognizing the Underutilized Economic Potential of Black Men in New Orleans.”

In addition, social service agencies of all types have an important role to play in strengthening fathers’ involvement with their children. Below we describe the best practice strategies that educators and service providers can implement to promote the important role of fathers. Then we feature a few examples of promising fatherhood programs that address the special needs of nonresident fathers and their families. These programs and policies can contribute to an ongoing conversation about how to strengthen New Orleans’ families, including how to strengthen children’s relationships with nonresident fathers.



Photos by Peter Nakhid

SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES OF ALL TYPES HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN STRENGTHENING FATHERS’ INVOLVEMENT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS TO ENGAGE FATHERS³¹

In order to engage fathers more fully as partners in children's development and learning, educators and social service agencies need to challenge the unspoken assumption that parent involvement means only mothers' involvement. There are three levels for describing the degree to which agencies should include fathers in their services. At the most basic level, service agencies can support father involvement by providing staff training and development that:

- *reinforces the important role of fathers*
- *demonstrates differences in male and female communication and parenting styles*
- *eliminates negative assumptions or stereotypes about men and fathers*
- *instills positive language that supports the roles of mothers and fathers*

At the next highest level, educators and social service agencies can promote fathers by ensuring their offices, staff, and communication policies are friendly to both mothers and fathers. For example:

- *The agency hires both men and women into professional positions that interact with parents and children.*
- *Photos, magazines, and brochures in the lobby represent men's and women's interests.*
- *Staff expects both mothers and fathers to be involved with their children, has contact information for mothers and fathers, and communicates with both mothers and fathers about children's progress and needs.*

The highest level at which service providers can engage fathers involves offering father inclusive programming that meets the specific needs of men. For example:

- *Fathers are recruited to assist in planning events and services for other fathers and for the broader community.*
- *Parenting activities are designed to appeal equally to fathers and mothers.*
- *Programs and services are offered at times convenient for fathers to attend.*

EXAMPLES OF MODEL FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

Since the 1990s, various fatherhood programs have been initiated around the nation with largely three goals: 1) to enhance fathers as economic providers, 2) to strengthen fathers as nurturers, and 3) to prevent unwanted or too-early fatherhood.³² Below we highlight six fatherhood initiatives that address the kinds of challenges faced by low-income African American fathers in New Orleans, including limited work experience, education and job skills; criminal records; and child support arrears.

SOUTH CAROLINA PROGRAM HELPS FATHERS ACCESS HEALTH CARE AND EMPLOYMENT TO BECOME BETTER FATHERS

The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families is a faith-based, nonprofit organization that provides a 24-week holistic fatherhood program, predominately for low-income African American men. Some fathers join the program voluntarily, and other fathers are court-ordered in lieu of incarceration for non-payment of child support (Jobs Not Jail participants).³³ Fathers participate in weekly peer-support meetings and are provided intensive case management services, including assistance in accessing health care, record expungement, transportation, employment, stable housing, and mediation services. The Center hired a nurse practitioner for four program sites to provide one-on-one services to fathers and to develop community resources to provide treatment and medical homes for fathers.³⁴ Early findings show that 63 percent of participants

who were unemployed when they enrolled in the fatherhood program later obtained employment and 79 percent of participants with child support arrearages reduced their arrears.³⁵ In addition, the success of Jobs Not Jail participants significantly reduced incarceration costs and recidivism rates.³⁶

RE-ENTRY INITIATIVE PROVIDES FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT AND PARENTING CLASSES WITHIN LOUISIANA PRISONS

Reentry Benefiting Families (RBF) is an initiative of Refined by Fire Ministries, Inc., that provides parenting classes, life skills training, and financial empowerment to offenders within the Dixon Correctional Institute (a state prison 30 miles north of Baton Rouge) and the State Police Inmate Barracks (a minimum security prison also near Baton Rouge). RBF implements the nationally recognized Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead financial empowerment curriculum, which includes 12 weeks of intensive course work on topics including theory of change, hidden rules of class, identifying available resources and building resources, and creating an individual plan for moving out of poverty and “getting ahead.” As part of its programming, RBF also trains a number of offenders to be peer facilitators who provide additional mentoring and instruction to participants outside of class time. RBF’s financial empowerment and parenting programs have been certified by the Louisiana Department of Corrections, and offenders earn good time (days off sentences) for completing the programs successfully. Reading and homework assignments are an integral part of the programs. RBF’s programs have received national attention as a best practice and have helped reduce recidivism rates at Dixon Correctional Institute.³⁷ In addition to its direct services at Dixon Correctional Institute and the State Police Inmate Barracks, RBF provides technical assistance to staff in several other state correctional facilities in Louisiana on how to establish parenting, life skills, relationship building, and financial empowerment programs.



MEMBERS OF THE SILVERBACK SOCIETY MENTOR 8TH GRADE BOYS IN NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Since 2007, the Silverback Society has been mentoring boys in New Orleans public schools to become successful men and proud fathers. The Society sends successful fathers into the public schools to provide 20 weeks of group mentoring to boys, many of whom lack positive male role models. Each weekly class consists of two role models from the Silverback Society mentoring a group of about 15 boys. About 25 different role models rotate through the class during the school year in order to expose students to different perceptual opportunities. The group mentoring class helps reverse peer pressure and teaches boys to value education as a gateway to real respect. A recent grant from the Kellogg Foundation will help the Silverback Society expand its mentoring program with a goal of reaching every African American boy in eighth grade in New Orleans.

TEXAS GIVES PARENTS OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Initiated in August 2005, the Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Choices program is a collaborative effort of the Office of the Attorney General of Texas (which enforces child support in Texas), the Texas Workforce Commission, and family court judges. The Texas Child Support Enforcement program identifies noncustodial parents behind in their child support and requests a court hearing for each. The presiding judge reviews the case and decides whether to order the father into a work program, which is run by the local workforce development board. Workforce staff meets immediately with the fathers ordered into the program. The fathers are given intensive employment services, including GED preparation; short-term occupational training such as forklift operation or obtaining an occupational license; and assistance with transportation, tools, or clothes needed for a job.³⁸ Evaluations of the Texas program found that participants in the



Photo by Peter Nakhid

NCP program were more likely to be employed and to be consistent in making child support payments compared to non-participants—and that these positive impacts persisted into at least the fourth year of the program.³⁹

LOUISVILLE NONPROFIT PROVIDES PARENTING AND EMPLOYMENT SKILLS ALONGSIDE SUBSTANCE ABUSE RECOVERY FOR FATHERS RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON

The Jefferson County Fatherhood Initiative teaches parenting and relationship skills to fathers re-entering the Louisville, Kentucky, community following release from prison, with a specific focus on men in substance abuse recovery. A complete fatherhood program lasts 20 sessions and is tailored to address the specific needs of re-entering parents, their partners, and their children.⁴⁰ The program teaches effective communication, conflict resolution, setting boundaries, and healthy attitudes and behaviors. The fatherhood program builds on the Creating Lasting Family Connections® program, which has been recognized nationally as a model program by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and others.⁴¹

FATHERHOOD ORGANIZATION IN BALTIMORE BRINGS LOW-INCOME FATHERS INTO SUPPORT NETWORK

A program of the Center for Urban Families, the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project was founded to help low-income fathers who were not

well-served by the social welfare delivery system to reconnect with their families, find employment, resolve child support issues, overcome addiction, and learn parenting skills. The Project reaches out to young fathers in Baltimore's toughest communities and brings them into a network of supports and opportunities. The Center offers two levels of job training programs. In the three-week STRIVE course, participants focus on attitudinal training, workplace etiquette, and proper attire and behavior. Successful graduates of STRIVE can enroll in the Career Path program, which provides opportunities to learn specific occupational skills, including advanced Microsoft Office certification, lead abatement and mold remediation training, and construction and mechanical engineering classes. In addition, the Center offers two in-depth parenting trainings for parents not romantically involved and for parents in committed relationships.⁴² Finally, the Center has also partnered with the state child support system to help fathers navigate the child support system, become compliant with their child support orders, and participate in the City's arrearage reduction program.⁴³ The Center for Urban Families' success in engaging hard-to-reach populations has been recognized as a national model, and the Center has established the Practitioners Leadership Institute to provide training and technical assistance for fatherhood and family strengthening programs across the nation.⁴⁴



Photos by Peter Nakhid

CONCLUSION

Until the 1990s, there were virtually no public policies or nonprofits anywhere in the nation that were serving the needs of poor, nonresident fathers. Today, that is changing as research is revealing the benefits of positive father-child relationships for children, community, and for the fathers themselves. In New Orleans, where the child poverty rate for African Americans is 55 percent, it is essential to have policies and programs that support poor, nonresident fathers' involvement in their children's lives and in the labor force.

Many individuals and organizations in New Orleans are already supporting fathers and future fathers, including the Silverback Society, the Reentry Benefiting Families initiative, and two new programs NOLA Dads and Father Time. But supporting fathers is not the domain of just one or a few organizations. Social service organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions, workforce development organizations, philanthropies, businesses, and policy makers all have important roles to play in engaging fathers—whether it be through ensuring services are father-friendly, teaching parenting skills, providing health care services for low-income men, offering job training in lieu of incarceration for fathers behind on child support, or providing intensive employment assistance.

At the end of the day, supporting and sustaining engagement of fathers across their children's lives is critically important for reducing delinquent and unhealthy behaviors among children and is an essential step toward addressing the pressing issues in our city. The 1950s stereotype of the American nuclear family, with the mother acting as the primary caregiver and the father working, no longer fits. Fathers are parents, too.



Photo by Peter Nakhid

IN NEW ORLEANS, WHERE THE CHILD POVERTY RATE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS IS 55 PERCENT, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT POOR, NONRESIDENT FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LIVES AND IN THE LABOR FORCE.

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

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FATHERS: Stay involved in the lives of your children. Your positive presence and support has a significant and long-term impact on their well-being.

K-12 EDUCATORS AND HUMAN SERVICE

PROVIDERS: Challenge the unspoken assumption that parent involvement means only mothers' involvement, and ensure that staff interactions, print materials, and all parent engagement activities engage fathers on an equal footing with mothers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS:

Convene manufacturing and construction industry employers that are struggling to find workers along with training providers, community colleges, and support service providers to innovate solutions for specific workforce challenges.

EMPLOYERS: Work closely with training providers, community colleges, and support service providers to design curriculums that address the skills needed in your industry.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: Realize that many of the men within your institution are fathers. Provide them with the education and support that they need to be better dads.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: Many uninsured adults are nonresidential fathers who are un- and underemployed. Make sure there are strategies for informing and engaging them in Medicaid in 2014.

POLICY MAKERS AND ADVOCATES: Design and institute policies that ensure local residents and minority-owned businesses have preference for employment and contracts on public sector construction projects.

PHILANTHROPIES: Ensure that grantee organizations that provide human services have father-friendly practices in place.

RESEARCHERS, ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS THAT WORK WITH MEN, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: Begin to collect information and data around men as fathers.



Photo by Peter Nakhid

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ABOUT THE NEW ORLEANS FATHERHOOD CONSORTIUM (NOFC)



Photo by Peter Nakhid

The Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy at Loyola University was instrumental in the formation of the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium (NOFC) in 2007. Concern about the plight of low-income children, families, neighborhoods—and especially the fathers connected to them—inspired a coalition of faith- and community-based organizations; educational organizations; and criminal justice, health, and social service entities to begin working together to develop comprehensive social supports, programs, public awareness, and policies that assist fathers in reaching their fullest potential.

The mission of the NOFC is to develop comprehensive social supports, programs, public awareness and policies that assist fathers in reaching their fullest potential. Our desire has been to work with organizations to develop awareness about the linkages of men and fathers to the issues of neighborhood rebuilding, recovery, and revitalization. At the center of the multitude of needs impacting the lives of fathers are illiteracy and low educational attainment. The Boggs Center's goals are to develop and carry out comprehensive programs and distribute public awareness materials that will contribute

to low-income fathers in the community reaching their fullest potential as effective and supportive parents. Through the development of community partnerships like the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium, the Boggs Center serves as a catalyst to strengthen adult literacy, families, and communities. Its role as convener of the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium is to provide information and a platform for the NOFC and its Father Fellows, and to help low-income fathers achieve success in continuing adult education, literacy GED instruction, training, and employment opportunities so that they can obtain living-wage jobs that offer benefits and career mobility.

To carry out its mission, the Boggs Center/NOFC employs the following strategies:

- *Raising public awareness of fathering issues through use of the media, technology, and collaborative activities*
- *Sharing national and local best practices on fathering*
- *Promoting responsible-fatherhood policy agendas at the national, state, and local levels*
- *Advocating for programs and policies that support development of fathers while benefiting their children, families, and community*
- *Keeping a finger on the pulse of the issues and voices of men through a participatory action-research agenda*

<http://www.loyno.edu/boggsliteracy/new-orleans-fatherhood-consortium>

NOFC'S PARTNERS INCLUDE:

44th Education Initiative, Inc.	Total Community Action
Aegis System	Tulane University – Prevention Research Center
Agenda for Children	Urban Strategies, Inc.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. – Alpha Beta Omega Chapter	Voices of Experience, Inc.
Ashé Cultural Arts Center/Efforts of Grace, Inc.	WBOK
Black Men United	WGSO
Catholic Charities of New Orleans	Women In Fatherhood, Inc.
CeaseFire	Xavier University
Central City Renaissance Alliance	Your Money Doctor
CFreedom Photography	Youth Empowerment Project
Channel Zero	
Coalition of 100 Black Women – New Orleans Chapter	
Delgado Community College	
Family Service of Greater New Orleans	
Friends and Families of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children	
Good Works Network	
Healthy Start New Orleans	
Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies	
Kallisto Research Consulting	
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. – New Orleans (LA) Alumni Chapter	
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. – Omicron Upsilon Chapter	
Loyola University – Lindy Boggs National Literacy Center	
LSU AgCenter	
Moving Forward Gulf Coast	
Neighborhoods Partnership Network	
New Orleans African American Museum	
New Orleans Recreation Development Commission	
NOLA Birthing Project	
Orleans Public Education Network	
OT Outreach	
Re-Entry Benefiting Families	
Safe Streets, Strong Communities	
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St. David Catholic Church	
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Dr. Petrice Sams-Abiodun is the Executive Director for the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy at Loyola University, where she has an opportunity to combine her research and social justice agendas to address the issue of adult literacy and education. In her role as the Director she is examining the broader issue of literacy as a vehicle for personal, economic and community empowerment. In an effort to link research with practice she works closely other community and faith-based organizations to eradicate low literacy. Dr. Sams-Abiodun is a native New Orleanian and

a graduate of a graduate of Tulane University in 2003 where she received a Ph.D. in Sociology. As a family demographer, her goal is to use research for the development and liberation of traditionally marginalized and oppressed people. Her research areas include poverty and family issues. Her present research focuses on the role and responsibilities of men as fathers, family and community members. She is also exploring adult transition issues. She has been invited to numerous conferences to share her work that examines strengths as well as the plight of low income African American men. Her research contributes to a national agenda that is assisting in the rethinking of how we view male attachment in low income families, family structure and formation.



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Mr. Rattler earned degrees from Howard University (Bachelor of Science '04) and Tulane University (Master Degree in Public Health - Education & Communication). Gregory currently serves the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy as Director of the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium. His personal and professional focus is on the plight of black men and the black male identity. As Director, he has continued the work of advocating for policies and best practices that empower fathers to be active figures in their families. Gregory facilitates partnerships, represents the Consortium on local and national levels, and participates in work to change policies involving child support.

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